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IZABELLA KAISER

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

The careers of graduates of special schools – different faces of adulthood among people with mild intellectual disabilities

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The source literature lacks a precise vision of an adult with an intellectual disability. The dominant view, in which the life of people with intellectual disabilities is perceived, is the indication of health, architectonic, employment, and educational barriers, or of the lowered social competencies required for the proper fulfilment of social roles. Is that right? The fates of the graduates of one of the special schools in Poznań, are an attempt to answer that. The subjects include both professionally active and unemployed graduates, women who have established families, and fulfil the roles mothers and wives, as well as, an adult man receiving pension benefits. The stories of Justyna, Patryk, Ania and Kamil, prove that people with mild intellectual disabilities consider vocational work as one of the basic attributes of adulthood. Simultaneously, they imply the need for urgent changes in special vocational education, aimed at minimising the observed discrepancies between the vocational competencies acquired by people with disabilities, and their fitness regarding the modern labour market. The fates of two adult women, Beata and Magda, confirm that marriage and family are values held in high regard, remaining an important aspect in the life plans of people with intellectual disabilities. Szymon's story is an example of a man who, due to somatic disorders accompanying intellectual disabilities, and the overprotective attitude of his parents, is unable to act as a fully mature person. Therefore, the adulthood of persons with mild intellectual disabilities has many faces. It seems important to monitor the situation of special school graduates sys-

tematically, as, in the constantly changing reality, it will allow them, to be more rationally prepared for the fulfilment of their social life.

KEY WORDS: adulthood, intellectual disability, vocational education

Introduction

Man is perceived as the maker of his own life, who constructs his biography by himself, formulates individual projects and aims by selecting the proper course in life and making attempts to maintain it. In consequence, man is responsible for selecting a particular "life project", taking the risk of potential fiascos and failures.

One of the factors that determine the adult functioning, and the creation of personal development paths, is the intellectual disability which, to a large degree, impedes or even prevents the fulfilment of developmental tasks. Only a few years ago, the adulthood of persons with partial intellectual ability was a subject rarely challenge in research activities and scholarly afterthought. "One may seem – writes A. Krause, that the persons with intellectual disabilities, after finishing the last phase of education, vanish not only from the area of interest of special pedagogy, but they also «disperse» in various institutions, often conceptually, organisationally, and structurally unprepared to work with these people"¹. Currently – as D. Wolska demonstrates – "the discussions, whether a person with an intellectual disability may become an adult, have ceased. While currently, no one denies them that right, and the time of the "eternal children" is no more, still, one still does not know, how to prepare such a person to enter the adult life, and whether all its aspects will be accessible"².

¹ A. Krause, *Problemy opieki rewalidacji osób dorosłych z upośledzeniem umysłowym – niedobór rozwiązań w teorii i praktyce*, [in:] *Dorosłość, niepełnosprawność, czas współczesny. Na pograniczach pedagogiki specjalnej*, (ed.) K. Rzedzicka, A. Kobylańska, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2003, p. 220.

² D. Wolska, *Wpływ prawidłowego przystosowania społecznego na jakość życia osób dorosłych z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] *Dorośli z niepełnosprawnością intelek-*

The dominant view, in which the adult life of people with intellectual disabilities, is the indication of barriers: health, architectonic, employment and education, or the lowered social competencies essential for the proper fulfilment of social roles. Additionally, A. Ostrowska indicates "a certain limitation of the process of socialisation of the persons with disabilities, as their closest environment, from fear of future frustrations and potential failures, implant them with a minimalist life orientation. It limits the aims, which are worth pursuing, and fails to equip with the means necessary for achieving those aims. Cultivating this passive attitude is, in a long-term perspective, equivalent to incapacitation and helplessness – therefore, features more fitting for a child, rather than an adult person"³.

The source literature still lacks a precise vision of an adult person with an intellectual disability. According to B. Tylewska-Nowak "the barrier seems to be the stereotypes in perceiving this group of persons, existing not only in the broadly understood society, but also among the specialists. The established model of care, in which the parent, the guardian, the teacher, or the therapist assume responsibility for the person under care, and satisfy the needs, who, to their understanding, are the most essential for persons with disabilities, contributes to a learned helplessness, submission, and passiveness"⁴. In consequence, the adulthood of persons with intellectual disabilities is often considered within the category of – using the words of S. Kowalik – "the sphere of lost development"⁵.

tualną w labiryntach codzienności. Analiza badań – krytyka podejść – propozycje rozwiązań, (ed.) B. Cytowska, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2011, p. 44.

³ A. Ostrowska, *Kompetencje społeczne osób niepełnosprawnych – bariery dorosłości*, [in:] *Dorosłość, niepełnosprawność, czas współczesny. Na pograniczach pedagogiki specjalnej*, (ed.) K. Rzedzicka, A. Kobyłańska, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2003, p. 52.

⁴ B. Tylewska-Nowak, *Wypełnianie zadań rozwojowych przez osoby dorosłe z umiarkowaną i znaczną niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] *Dorośli z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w labiryntach codzienności. Analiza badań – krytyka podejść – propozycje rozwiązań*, (ed.) B. Cytowska, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2011, p. 19.

⁵ S. Kowalik, *Psychologia rehabilitacji*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2007, p. 52.

Is that right? The stories of the graduates of one of the special schools in Poznań, are an attempt to answer that question.

The methodological basis of own study

The aim of the undertaken study, was the identification of the current situation of young adults with mild intellectual disabilities, who, in 2013, graduated the Special Vocational School no. in Poznań (Zasadnicza Szkoła Zawodowa Specjalna nr 2 w Poznaniu). The main study issue was formulated in the form of a question: what are the occupational and life fates of the graduates, regarding their educational and occupational choices. The detailed issues were dedicated to the learned vocation and the current occupation, their labour market status, the means, and potential difficulties related to finding employment, the causes of not taking a job, as well as, the current family situation of the subjects. In order to gather the factual sources, qualitative studies were performed, with the application of the in-depth narrative interview method, based on the paradigm of symbolic interactionism, according to which “people are capable of reflecting upon their lives, allowing the scholars to understand its object”⁶. Each interview lasted c. 30 minutes and was recorded via a voice recorder, and afterwards, subjected to verbatim transcription. The interviews were done in January 2019, with eight graduates who signed an informed consent to participate in the exploration study.

The stories of the special school graduates – the adulthood of persons with mild intellectual disabilities – the results of own research

In 2010, in the Special Vocational School no 2 in Poznań (a part of the John Paul II Special School Complex no 102 – Zespół Szkół

⁶ U. Flick, *Projektowanie badania jakościowego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2010, p. 139.

Specjalnych Nr 102 im. Jana Pawła II), the 10-person first grade began their education. All of the students had mild intellectual disability certificates. For three years, they have been educated for the vocation of assistant employees of hotel service. They were preparing to work in hotels, motels, guest houses, excursion hotels, and other lodging establishments. During their vocational education, the subjects would acquire skills regarding performing supplementary works related to guest service, such as: preparing guest rooms, luggage transportation, the use of cleaning equipment and appliances in the vicinity of the hotel, as well as, landscaping maintenance. The practical vocational education was conducted in Poznań hotels such as Hotel Rzymski, Campanille Poznań, Hotel Andersia or Hotel Dorian.

The subjects have graduated in 2013. They all successfully passed their theoretical and practical exams confirming their vocational qualifications.

Six years have passed. The former students are between 26 and 29 years old, i.e. they are in the period of the so-called, early adulthood, or emerging adulthood⁷. Their fates vary greatly.

Justyna⁸ was an exemplary student. She graduated the vocational school (as previously, the intermediate school) with distinction. The achievement is even more significant, as the girl had to combine her school responsibilities with raising a daughter, born when Justyna was 15. Justyna and her child lived with her partner, and his parents. However, the most significant aid regarding caring for the daughter was provided by her grandmother, to whom she would take little Patrycja every day. After graduating, Justyna took up employment in her vocation, in one of Poznań hotels. However, after a few months, she resigned. Justyna explained that the reasons for her resignation were low wages, difficult working conditions,

⁷ A.I. Brzezińska, K. Appelt, B. Ziółkowska, *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka*, [in:] *Psychologia. Podręcznik akademicki*, (eds.) J. Strelau, D. Doliński, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2008, pp. 95-292.

⁸ The names of the subjects were changed.

very unstable working hours, as well as, expectations of full availability. Her remarks are symptomatic:

When I was going to apprenticeship, I really liked working in the dining room, or at the reception, a job of attending guests. But, when I started to work, I always had to clean hotel rooms, change the sheets, clean the bathroom, and carry huge pots. It was very hard. I worked for almost 10 hours, when some important guests would arrive, or an organised trip, my superior ordered me to come to work, even when I was supposed to have a day off. Well, and they really paid poorly...

For a number of months, Justyna was unemployed, a fact that she remembers unpleasantly:

I was at home, bored, because how much can you clean? Each day, I would get up, and not know what to do with myself. Later, it was even worse – there was not enough money for anything. Bartek [the partner] yelled, that he spends so much on food and clothes for Pati [the daughter]. It was tough, my grandmother helped a little.

Currently Justyna works at a trade market.

Patryk – the second graduate, showed little interest in the vocation that he was learning. Already during his education, he worked part-time as a security officer in a shopping centre. Currently, he has full-time employment. The man is very happy with his work, he feels accepted and appreciated. Patryk did not start a family, he lives with his parents.

Ania was a very ambitious and a hard-working student, however, not always did it yield results in the grades received (Ania's intellectual disorder was diagnosed as the lower end of the mild disability category). However, the girl displayed significant cognitive needs, wide interests, further positively stimulated by her family environment. After graduating the vocational school, Anna continued her education in a Secondary School for Adults. She has secondary education, however – despite two attempts, she failed the secondary school exam. Ania finished a cosmetics course, and currently, works as a helper at a beauty parlour. She is fully satisfied with her employment, which can be seen in the following statement:

Work is great! Calm, silent, clean, the ladies are so nice, they praise me often. I can even do my own make-up when I go out somewhere. I love going to the parlour.

The girl lives with her parents, and does not plan to start a family.

The conversations, conducted with the three young people, confirm how important the capability to perform work and earn income, to be a worker, is for the persons with intellectual disabilities, as a significant aspect of adulthood.

For Justyna and Patryk, employment is necessary, as it provides them with income, required to satisfy their everyday needs. Patryk's position is clear:

I'm an adult, I cannot keep on taking money from my parents, I have to earn a living myself.

Similar conclusions are formulated by A. Krause, A. Żyta, and S. Nosarzewska⁹, demonstrating, that in the case of persons with mild intellectual disabilities, the lack of employment may implicate financial difficulties, as they are not eligible for an allowance.

Moreover, one must clearly highlight, that the vocational activity has a significant influence on the development of the psyche, the personality and the course of life of persons with intellectual disabilities. B. Jachimczak highlights, that "often, employment is the only possibility of social participation for the person with a disability. [...] Work, exactly due to the fact of being a continuous activity, gives the possibility of satisfying the need for self-accomplishment, necessary to draw satisfaction from life. Additionally, it provides a chance to accomplish other important needs: respect, acknowledgement, and belonging"¹⁰. A similar opinion is expressed by A. Krauze, who indicates that "the vocational activity of persons

⁹ A. Krause, A. Żyta, S. Nosarzewska, *Normalizacja środowiska społecznego osób z niepełnosprawnościami intelektualną*, Wydawnictwo Akapit, Toruń 2010.

¹⁰ B. Jachimczak, *Spółeczno-edukacyjne uwarunkowania startu zawodowego młodych osób niepełnosprawnych. Studium empiryczne z regionu łódzkiego*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2011, p. 59.

with intellectual disabilities is essential for their psychological health. Social situations that come with it, e.g. complaining about your superior, a difficult day at work, no jobs at the company, or the contentment related to success, a promotion, an accomplished schedule, an announced raise, etc., provide an optimal method of revalidation, i.e. evidence, that we all live by the same problems and joys, and that, regardless of our potential, we are all the same"¹¹.

On the basis of the conducted interviews, one may formulate a thesis, that Justyna, Ania, and Patryk successfully entered their surrounding reality, and in result, they are not recognised as persons with intellectual disabilities.

All three graduates are employed, but none of them work in their learned vocation. Therefore, the following issues become essential: why do the aforementioned do not work in the vocation that they had learned at school? Additionally, is the vocational offer for students with intellectual disabilities, adequate to the market demand?

It seems that a significant number of special schools did not adjust to the new labour market, and in result, their graduates work in other vocations, or, are „introduced” to planned unemployment by their schools. The list of proposed vocational options has not changed for years, this often being the result of the surplus of vocations that the fully able persons are not interested in. Therefore, J. Hućik rightly states, that the vocational education “should lead to employing the person with intellectual disabilities in order to successfully place the person within the labour market”¹². This would lower the negative effects of the Polish transformation, that the persons with disabilities felt the most, moreover, as, according to E. Wapiennik “there is a complete lack of lifelong education di-

¹¹ A. Krauze, *Integracyjne złudzenia ponowoczesności (sytuacja ludzi niepełnosprawnych)*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2000, p. 155.

¹² J. Hućik, *Czynniki warunkujące przygotowanie do zawodu osób niepełnosprawnych umysłowo*, [in:] *Między wsparciem doraźnym a wspieraniem racjonalnym, czyli o uwarunkowaniach socjalizacji społecznej osób niepełnosprawnych*, (ed.) Z. Gajdzica, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2008, p. 77.

rected at persons with intellectual disabilities, which shows the organisational deficits of the educational system”¹³.

In search for the reasons of the vocational school graduates resignation from seeking employment in accordance with the learned vocation, it is worth quoting Patryk's words:

I was not interested in working as hotel help, it is such a strange vocation, completely not for me. During the apprenticeship, I would always say, that something hurt me, that I was feeling bad, that I was tired, and someone would always do something for me. I will surely not go to work in the hotel industry, because I don't like it.

When asked about the reasons behind his choice of employment, the man replies:

My parents and the school pedagogue came up with the idea, besides, there was not much choice.

B. Cytowska's observations are similar, as she indicates the “«deadly sin» committed in vocational profiling, i.e. disregard regarding the psychophysical capabilities of the youth. Therefore, further abandonment related to considering own interests and passions while choosing a vocation, come as no surprise”¹⁴.

Kamil – an another graduate, is currently unemployed, however, he is seeking employment intensively, and is ready to undertake it. The man took up work many times: he cleaned rooms in a local gym, he arranged the wares in a warehouse, he prepared packages for a courier company, he was an assistant construction worker. However, he would lose his job quickly, because, as he explains:

They treated me badly there, the boss was always angry with me, I always got the most work, everyone would put all the work on me, and the pay was poor.

¹³ E. Wapiennik, *Prawa osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną. Dostęp do edukacji i zatrudnienia. Raport. Polska, Polskie Stowarzyszenie na Rzecz Osób z Upośledzeniem Umysłowym*, Warszawa 2005, p. 86.

¹⁴ B. Cytowska, *(Nie)przygotowanie osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] *Człowiek z niepełnosprawnością w rezerwacie przestrzeni publicznej*, (ed.) Z. Gajdzica, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2013, p. 164.

Kamil lives with his parents, who, due to their age and health, require constant care. The man is still seeking work, as for him, it is one of the basic attributes of adulthood.

Kamil's story is a type of unemployment that the people with disabilities face, being, according to B. Wołoskiuk (2012) the most discriminated of group. E. Zakrzewska-Manterys is even more outright in her opinion, stating, that the people with limited intellectual abilities "practically, do not exist in the labour market"¹⁵ in Poland.

The unemployment of persons with disabilities is a serious issue from the perspective of the disrupted revalidation process. The fact is mentioned by B. Wołoskiuk, who writes that the lack of employment "impedes the development of personality, may cause the lowering of intellectual capabilities, and the decline of the qualifications and skills acquired during education, leading to breakdowns and depression, and lowering life and vocational ambitions"¹⁶.

The presented biographies of the four young people with intellectual disabilities: Justyna, Patryk, Ania, and Kamil, lead to a reflection, that the optimal model should be, on the one hand, providing help in entering the open labour market to those individuals with disabilities, who want it, and are prepared for this challenge, while on the other hand, provide work in sheltered conditions, to those persons with intellectual disabilities, who fail to locate themselves within the open labour market.

W. Łukowski and D. Wiszejko-Wierzbicka indicate the barriers that impede, or at time, prevent the persons with disabilities from finding their way in the sphere of employment. The authors indicate the situation, in which the person with a disability must not only struggle against own limitations, but, additionally, overcome

¹⁵ E. Zakrzewska-Manterys, *Wykształcenie a sytuacja zawodowa osób niepełnosprawnych*, [in:] *Młodzi niepełnosprawni o sobie. Rodzina, edukacja, praca*, (ed.) E. Giermanowska, Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2007, p. 63.

¹⁶ B. Wołoskiuk, *Kształcenie zawodowe osób z niepełnosprawnościami*, [in:] *Kształcenie zawodowe i ustawiczne a potrzeba rynku*, (eds.) B. Wołoskiuk, M. Nowak, Wydawnictwo PSWJPiI, Biała Podlaska 2012, p. 238.

the negative stereotype of being perceived solely as beneficiaries of allowance, and social assistance.

Sheltered employment is often criticised for segregation and minor therapeutic efficiency, as well as, as a significant expense for the state. However, in some circumstances, it appears to be the only solution. Such belief is expressed by W. Łukowski and D. Wiszejko-Wierzbička, who state that "it would be difficult to expect everyone to be prepared to undertake the designing of own vocational career in current conditions. The lack of adequate competencies, education, and skills, impede that ability"¹⁷. However, improvements are necessary, regarding the quality of the offered employment, and the degree of adjusting it to both to the possessed qualifications and competencies, as well as, special needs and limitations of persons with disabilities.

Another possibility is supported employment, as a method of working with persons with disability, or persons from other groups endangered with exclusion, regarding the access and maintaining a paid employment in the open labour market. The "job coaching" support model is based on the mutual work of the work coach, or his assistant, with the person with a disability designated, as presented by B. Cytowska, by means of three principles: "first place the person in their appropriate workplace, then train them within the framework of performing particular worker's activities, and lastly, support them in maintaining employment"¹⁸. The last principle seems to be of most significance, which may be supported by the aforementioned story of Kamil, who, without support, lost his job quickly. Within this context, it is worth mentioning the project titled "The employers assistant – innovative support in employing persons with disabilities" ("Asystent pracodawcy – innowacyjne wsparcie

¹⁷ W. Łukowski, D. Wiszejko-Wierzbička, *Wizerunek aktywności zawodowej osób z ograniczeniami sprawności*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Psychologii Społecznej „Academica”, Warszawa 2008, p. 66.

¹⁸ B. Cytowska, *Trener pracy – nowy zawód(?) w zatrudnianiu wspomaganym osób z niepełnosprawnościami*, [in:] *Osoby niepełnosprawne w drodze ku dorosłości*, (ed.) D. Wołoska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Kraków 2014, p. 274.

zatrudniania osób niepełnosprawnych”), designed by the Time Space Identity Association (Stowarzyszenie Czas Przestrzeń Tożsamość) tested in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship. According to the premise of the project, the task of the employer’s assistant is to support entrepreneurs in an effective conducting of the process of employing persons with disabilities, as well as, consulting support during the time of cooperation.

Another character – Szymon – due to his health issues, is on allowance. He works part-time, at his father’s company. He distributes advertising flyers and performs cleaning work. During a conversation, he admits:

It’s ok. I have a lot of time for myself, I can watch TV, get some sleep, sometimes I go to the store or take a walk. I have nothing to worry about.

The man lives with his parents and his younger sister.

Szymon’s biography indicates that “for some persons with disabilities, the certificate about their inability to take up work, and using social allowances, is, at times, the only solution allowing to function in the reality of the «late modernity». The need for an independent creation of own future, and taking responsibility for the potential erroneous choices, in the situation of the growing risk awareness, may turn out to be too much of a challenge to some”¹⁹. Szymon seems unprepared for such challenges, and he lacks adequate competencies and social skills, that would allow him for a more independent, constructive, or more “adult” way of solving the incoming issues.

Analysing Simons biography, it is worth mentioning the issue of the family attitude towards the vocational activity of its members with disabilities. The man’s parents assume, that their adult son should not work due to the neurological afflictions (epilepsy, balance problems, vertigo), and a speech disorder, co-occurring with

¹⁹ W. Łukowski, D. Wiszejko-Wierzbicka, *Wizerunek aktywności zawodowej osób z ograniczeniami sprawności*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Psychologii Społecznej „Academica”, Warszawa 2008, p. 65.

his intellectual disability. The story of Szymon is supported by the opinion of K.D. Rzedzicka and A. Kobylańska, that often "due to own state, or in the result of the limitations, or overprotection of family members, the person with intellectual disability is incapable of becoming a fully adult person"²⁰.

Another graduate – Beata, is a mother of two, does not work, and takes care of home. She lives with her husband and two daughters in a village near Poznań. She presents her situation as follows:

I can manage the house, I cook well, and I do the cleaning. Only with the children, my mother helped at first. Now I know how to take care of them myself. Well, sometimes there's a little mess, sometimes I don't do the laundry, and make dinner in time. Maybe, sometimes I would like to go to work, but for now, I don't think about it.

Beata's husband is fully able-bodied, he works as a driver for a small local enterprise. The woman may be happy with her current situation, she feels fulfilled as a mother, which can be confirmed by her statement filled with warmth and happiness:

You know, my girls are great! So polite, so lovely, and sweet... Sure, sometimes they make a ruckus, they run around, scatter their things all over the place, total commotion... In September, Zuza will go to pre-school, so there will be some more peace and quiet.

Taking care of own household, an entirely intellectually able partner, and motherhood, allowed Beata to build a positive self-assessment, and feel like a fully valuable person. One may assume, that her neighbours do not even notice, that she graduated a special school.

Magda also started a family. She has a little son. The woman is also taking care of her twin sister with a moderate intellectual disability. Magda is not very eager to talk about herself. She lives with her son's father, but she speaks of him in ill words, that:

²⁰ K.D. Rzedzicka, A. Kobylańska, *Dorostłość, niepełnosprawność, czas współczesny – na pograniczach pedagogiki specjalnej*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2003, p. 117.

he drinks a lot, sometimes he gives me no money, he doesn't work full-time anywhere, he just takes some part time jobs, at constructions, or to help in the field, but he gets bored quickly, and quits. Good thing that I have allowance, Aska has it too; I get some from help and the life goes on somehow.

The biographies of Magda and Beata contradict the opinion of B. Cytowska, who claims that “for people with intellectual disabilities, enjoying marriage, parenthood, living alone, or autonomy, is still of little probability”²¹. Marriage, and starting a family, are highly valued by persons with intellectual disabilities, they constitute significant elements of their life plans, as supported by, i.a. the studies of K. Materny (2003) conducted among the Special Vocational School students ranging 17 and 20 years of age²².

The interview conducted with Magda, and, particularly, her statements about the atmosphere at home, her relation to her son and her husband, arouse concern regarding her pedagogical capabilities. This is, what the woman says of her three-year-old son:

Brajanek [the son] does not listen to me at all. If we are at the store, and he wants a toy, a lolly pop, or something else, I buy it, because otherwise he will start yelling, throwing himself on the floor, and I don't want people to say that I am a bad mother. So I buy it, and then Mateusz [the husband – ed.] makes a scene, that I spend money on foolish stuff. I tell you, ma'am, It is not easy.

Similar observations regarding the everyday life of persons with mild intellectual disabilities were presented by M. Grütz, who concluded that, “bad material conditions were going along with pedagogical inefficiency, and in some cases, children would be placed in educational care facilities (....). Additionally, it is not a rare case, when the parents' rights are taken away from persons with intellec-

²¹ B. Cytowska, *(Nie)przygotowanie osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] *Człowiek z niepełnosprawnością w rezerwacie przestrzeni publicznej*, (ed.) Z. Gajdzica, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2013, p. 155.

²² K. Materny, *Wizja rodziny i koncepcje małżeństwa młodzieży z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] *Dorosłość, niepełnosprawność, czas współczesny. Na pograniczych pedagogiki specjalnej*, (eds.) K. Rzedzicka, A. Kobylańska, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2003, p. 422.

tual disabilities, despite the fact, that they hadn't been given any previous support in raising their children"²³.

The last of the graduates – Kasia, went to Germany with her mother, to work. She does not remain in contact with the others.

Summary and conclusions

As shown above by the described biographies, the adulthood of persons with mild intellectual disabilities has many faces.

One of the key issues is, without a doubt, to take up vocational activity. The varying stories of the graduates, presented in the article, provide us with information allowing us to formulate accurate developmental recommendations regarding the system of professional education, leading to a reflection that, "swift solutions need time, when the young people with mild intellectual disabilities end their systematic school education – they are no longer students, and so they can, and they should take up work"²⁴. After considering the unquestionable limitations (difficulties in social communication, knowledge acquisition, gaining complicated vocational skills, the independent work planning, or the social-vocational adaptation), the workers with intellectual disability are capable of performing particular activities, vocational tasks, and even some vocations efficiently, and achieve results in accordance with the employers' expectations²⁵. This requires identifying their vocational capabilities

²³ M. Grütz, *Osoby z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną jako partnerzy, małżonkowie i rodzice – dotychczasowe doniesienia badawcze*, [in:] *Dorośli z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w labiryntach codzienności. Analiza badań – krytyka podejść – propozycje rozwiązań*, (ed.) B. Cytowska, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2011, pp. 177-178.

²⁴ D. Baraniewicz, *Poczucie dorosłości osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w stopniu lekkim w różnych przestrzeniach*, [in:] *Osoby niepełnosprawne w drodze ku dorosłości*, (ed.) D. Wolska, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Pedagogicznego, Kraków 2014, p. 40.

²⁵ T. Majewski, *Problem zatrudnienia osób z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną*, [in:] *Dorośli z niepełnosprawnością intelektualną w labiryntach codzienności. Analiza badań – krytyka podejść – propozycje rozwiązań*, (ed.) B. Cytowska, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2011, pp. 89-105.

instead of focusing solely on their disability and barriers. Therefore, changes in special vocational education are necessary, in the directions indicated by A. Krause (2005). The first of them is related to the necessity of developing general social and technological competencies while resigning from presenting the students with a simplified and often useless vocational knowledge. The second task is the "participation in organising a new, sheltered employment system, with the use of the previously tested Western-European models"²⁶. It is advisable, that the special vocational schools take action directed at increasing the quality of preparing the student for further education, including the development of individual needs and talents; at analysing the adequacy of vocational education in the school with the actual labour market requirements, considering the factors that affect the student, who makes a choice regarding his vocation, with the consideration of his individual capabilities and needs; as well as, at organising the support for the graduate in searching for work.

Simultaneously, one must add, that regardless of the objective educational barriers that limit the capabilities of acquiring vocational education and later employment, often, one may observe a lack of motivation among persons with disabilities, to create their own lives, and the difficulties with using their opportunities "even when they appear in a clear, and a tangible way"²⁷.

Additionally, it is advisable to observe the functioning of the families started by persons with intellectual disabilities and providing them with more than just social support.

In conclusion, what seems to be important, is the systematic monitoring of the stories of the special school graduates, as this will allow for a more rational "equipment of the persons with disabili-

²⁶ A. Krause, *Człowiek niepełnosprawny wobec przeobrażeń społecznych*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2005, p. 209.

²⁷ A. Ostrowska, *Kompetencje społeczne osób niepełnosprawnych – bariery dorosłości*, [in:] *Dorosłość, niepełnosprawność, czas współczesny. Na pograniczach pedagogiki specjalnej*, (eds.) K. Rzedzicka, A. Kobyłańska, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2003, p. 52.

ties with the necessary social competencies, adjusted to the changing conditions, and requirements of modernity, that would ensure their increased efficiency of actions, and an effective participation in the life of a modern society”²⁸.

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²⁸ Ibidem.

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